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AN INTEGRATED THEORY OF PARTY GOALS AND PARTY CHANGE

Robert Harmel and Kenneth Janda

ABSTRACT

The authors present a theory that seeks to explain why parties change their political strategies, organizational characteristics and issue positions. Whereas most of the existing literature on party change deals with party systems, the focus here is on individual parties. Whereas much of the literature views parties as responding more or less gradually to socioeconomic change, change is here regarded as a discontinuous outcome of specific party decisions linked to party goals. This approach is placed in the literature by reviewing extant theories of party change. Our theory itself is initially advanced in a discursive section which suggests that change does not 'just happen', but instead results from leadership change, a change of dominant faction within the party, and/or an external stimulus for change. The article then presents a more formal exposition of this theory, consisting of definitions, assumptions, and a series of testable propositions. It concludes with illustrative examples of this theoretical framework.

KEY WORDS • change • goals • ideology • party organization

Introduction

Party 'goals' and party 'change' have figured prominently in recent research on political parties. Concern with party goals is reflected in work by Strom (1990), Laver and Schofield (1990), Budge and Keman (1990) and Schlesinger (1991), who analyze the strategies of vote-seeking, office-seeking and policy-seeking parties. Most studies of party change – as represented by Wolinetz (1988), Mair (1989) and Mair and Smith (1990) – have dealt with changes in party systems. Less attention has been given to change in individual parties, but this has been studied by Wilson (1989) and by Katz and Mair (1992) in their major multicountry project. With a few exceptions (see Schlesinger, 1991: 187–99), scholars have not studied party change in the context of party goals. This article integrates these topics by developing a theory of party change that uses party goals as a major concept in explaining changes in individual parties.

This contrasts with much of the literature that deals with changes in party systems. Those writings are typically based on detecting fluctuations or trends in the support for parties within a system over time (Maguire, 1983; Pedersen, 1983; Sundberg, 1987). Generally speaking, these and other studies show increases in the electoral volatility of party systems since the 1960s (Mair, 1989). (For an amended view that suggests less postwar volatility, see Mair, 1993.) As Reiter notes, this literature was stimulated by the real or perceived 'decline' of political parties in industrialized societies (1989: 325). If parties decline, they may also fail. In *When Parties Fail*, Lawson and Merkl (1988) edited a collection of articles on alternative organizations – interest groups and minor parties – that emerge as organizational competitors to existing parties. However, others have argued that the rise of new parties advocating new political issues demonstrates something other than the decline of parties as governmental institutions (Harmel, 1985; Selle and Svåsand, 1991). After all, parties in electoral decline are presumably replaced by other parties on the rise. Nevertheless, as established parties lose support and as new parties share the vote, electoral volatility increases, providing evidence of changes in party systems.

In contrast to the theme of 'volatility' in the system change literature, most writings on individual parties view party change as incremental and gradual. This is inherent in the term 'decline,' which implies a process of deterioration. Accordingly, Reiter infers from this literature that 'party decline' refers to:

> . . . the phenomenon in which political parties in general are less determinative of the attitudes and behavior of political actors on both the mass and elite levels, less highly regarded, and less likely to inspire the electoral act than they once were. The phrase 'in general' is meant to distinguish the phenomenon of party decline from the misfortunes of any one particular political party (1989: 326).

This view of party change also appears in earlier literature, such as in Kirchheimer's familiar thesis (1966) that many western parties had changed issue positions incrementally after World War II, becoming less ideological and more 'catch-all' in nature. Kirchheimer's thesis was confirmed by Thomas' (1975) longitudinal study of 54 parties in 12 nations, which showed 'a dramatic narrowing in the scope of domestic political conflict' on issue positions over nearly a century (1975: 46, 1980). Using longitudinal survey and membership data, however, neither Reiter (1989) nor Selle and Svåsand (1991) found systematic evidence of decline in party support within several western nations, although their measures clearly demonstrate volatility in party support.

Still viewing change incrementally, scholars recently have shifted attention from party changes on political issues and in popular support to changes in party organizations (which Kirchheimer also encompassed in his 1966 article). Wolinetz states:

> . . . if parties are adaptive organisations, adjusting their appeals to the audiences whose votes they seek, then the continuity of party systems need not be seen in terms of (shifting) electoral attachments, the pressures of (often lapsed) organisational networks, or the filtering effects of (disappearing) partisan presses. Instead, parties and party systems may survive because parties adjust their appeals to the changing predilections of their electorates (1988: 304).

Accordingly, this is the locus of the Katz and Mair cross-national project on party change, which assumes that party organizations have been:

> . . . characterized by a shifting bias over time, with the more recent developments in organizational style tending to favor the party as governing organization and, increasingly, as bureaucratic organization, and tending to disadvantage the party as membership organization (1990: 14).

There is considerable validity to viewing party change as a gradual process of adaptation, and the cross-national research supervised by Katz and Mair (1992) assumes that parties from 1960 to 1990 'were changing' and 'were adapting to the challenges' posed by their changing environment (p. 9). In contrast to this continuous view of party change, however, some scholars (e.g. Panebianco, 1988: 253–7) have described instances of abrupt changes in party ideology for electoral gains, with the German SPD's ideological shift to the right in 1959 as the stellar example. This alternative view focuses attention on specific actions taken by the party and particularly by party leaders (Wilson, 1980: 542–4) in reacting to environmental changes. It shifts the focus simultaneously from the system level to the level of individual party organizations and from a gradual view of change to a discontinuous view.

Whether arguing that most changes in party organization in recent decades can be depicted as a gradual erosion of the organization, or that parties have been 'forced' to professionalize in response to environmental change, most statements about party change have given little attention to the parties' own decision-making processes in effecting organizational change. In part, this neglect is due to a theoretical orientation that gives precedence to 'primary' causes in explaining party change. This perspective is reflected in the explanation of organizational change that underlies the Katz and Mair project:

> The immediate source of changes in these parameters is to be found in the internal politics of the party. Often, however, the ultimate source is in the party's environment . . . This dynamic aggregates to the observation that parties adapt to changes in their environments (1990: 18).

In contrast, it is the major premise of this article that party change does not 'just happen'. In fact, decisions to change a party's organization, issue positions or strategy face a wall of resistance common to large organizations. A successful effort to change the party usually involves both a good reason (which, granted, often does involve the need to take account

of environmental changes) and the building of a coalition of support. This article is an effort to develop a theory of party change which incorporates elements of a number of extant theories of party change, which assumes that most (though not all) party changes result from decisions of party operatives and which includes internal as well as external causal factors. Far from assuming that party changes 'just happen' or 'must happen', we suggest that party change is normally a result of leadership change, a change of dominant faction within the party and/or an external stimulus for change.

Further, this theory bridges the gap between two literatures on party activity: that which provides theory on party change, and that which provides a theory of party goals. The resulting, integrated theory provides for differing impacts of different external stimuli, based on the fit of the stimulus to a party's 'primary goal'. In so doing, the theory explains not only the *occurrence* of party change, but also the *magnitude* of party change, and offers at least some potential for predicting the *type* of party change as well.

Extant Theories of Party Change

Before offering our own theory of party change, we will review a number of extant models. Ours is, after all, something of a hybrid of some of those and includes elements of all of them. Panebianco (1988) has recently provided his own summary of existing theory and it is useful to begin with his work. Shaping the main theoretical issues as three basic questions, Panebianco offers up what might he considered a set of theories, derivable from the various combinations of answers. On the question of whether party change is 'evolutionary' or 'developmental', Panebianco associates the first view with the work of Robert Michels (1962). The evolutionary view sees party change being determined by natural tendencies as the organization passes from one stage to another, with the stages common to all political organizations. This view often employs the metaphor of 'life-cycle' from organizational theory (Whetten, 1987: 337–8), although political scientists do not use the concept rigorously (nor do organizational theorists; see O'Rand and Krecker, 1990: 256–7). The developmental view, to which Panebianco himself subscribes, finds 'organizational change as the effect of changes in alliances among organizational actors, not as stemming from an organization's necessary development. There is no obligatory path to organizational change in this perspective' (1988: 239–40).

On the second question of whether party change is intentional or non-intentional, Panebianco associates the first view with management theories which 'see change as the effect of deliberate and conscious choices' (p. 240), while the non-intentional thesis provides 'that the "disfunctions" (or at least what are perceived as such by the organizational actors) produce reactions

and choices and they lead to change *only when* they are exceptionally serious, in situations of acute organizational crisis' (p. 240). In Panebianco's terms, the two views 'correspond to the "rational" and "natural systems" models', respectively (p. 241). His own conclusion: 'Neither of the two schools is . . . entirely wrong: organizational change is the fruit of both choices and, because of the actor's bounded rationality and the multiplicity of organizational pressures, unforeseeable effects' (pp. 241–2).

On a third question, whether the origins of change are exogenous or endogenous, Panebianco equates the first with the idea that party change is externally induced by changes in the environment and the second view with the idea that party change results 'mainly due to changes in the organization's internal distribution of power' (p. 242). As with the former question, Panebianco himself prefers a hybrid answer:

> The most persuasive hypothesis, in our opinion, is that organizational change is, in most cases, the effect of an external stimulus (environmental and/or technological) which joins forces with internal factors which were themselves undermining the power structure (even, for example, generational changes) . . . (p. 242).

To us, it seems that the first two questions are best thought of as dealing with major premises of change, and we are satisfied with Panebianco's choices in each case. The third question, and perhaps the most important, deals with the central remaining theoretical issue: whether organizational change is primarily the result of environmental changes and related decisions, internal changes and related decisions, or a combination of the above.

The 'environmentally induced change' thesis may be seen as derivative of the thesis (elaborated and investigated in Harmel and Janda, 1982) that parties are shaped by their environments. A logical deduction would be that parties which don't 'fit' their environments as well as others won't 'perform' as well either, and that the bad performance will in turn lead to decision to change so as to better fit and better perform. This thesis is discussed in Deschouwer (1992), based on Schreyogg (1980). As Deschouwer sees it:

> There is one major problem, and it has been the major criticism of the model: it is fairly deterministic. The environment selects the fittest. By using this Darwinist formulation, the population ecology of organizations becomes even more deterministic than the usual models dealing with the relationship between organizations and environments (1992: 12).

First, he argues, there is the fact that parties also affect their environments and not just the other way around, and there is also the problem that the organization's leadership still has the freedom of choice to stay the course and pay whatever consequences might result. Deschouwer's own remedy: to add the notion that the critical actors within the party must *perceive* environmental changes and probable effects for the party in order for the environmental change to have an impact in the form of party change.

'Perception' is the intermediate variable that has to be placed between objective facts and
the reactions of the parties (1992: 17).

A variant of the 'fit' explanation for change might be labeled the 'con-
tagion theory'. Here, the most relevant dimension of the environment for a
given party is the 'other parties'. This is the thesis that 'if you're going to
compete with them successfully, you have to look and act like them'. (The
difference presumably comes in that you don't have to 'think' like them.)
Relatedly, in settings where coalitions are commonplace, 'if you're going to
be invited to join them in government, you'd better not only look and act like
them, but even think enough like them to be considered acceptable'. In this
model, it is the parties that don't 'fit' (and presumably *only* those parties)
that will feel pressured (presumably by performance considerations) to
change, and they will always change in the direction of conformity with the
'norm' for the system.

Though it would probably be hard today to find any serious student of
parties and party change who would reject all environmental influence, there
are those who feel that internal factors have been given short shrift, and the
environment's role has been exaggerated. Deschouwer subscribes to the
latter view to some extent and, in Albinsson's analysis (1986) of changes in
Sweden's Moderate Party, he places the major emphasis on a number of
internal factors, relegating such environmental changes as 'national con-
stitutional reform, the public subsidies of political parties, the reform of
local government boundaries and the shifting public support' (p. 191) to a
secondary role. Albinsson identifies change in economic resources and inter-
nal conflicts as the primary sources of change (supplemented by fluctuations
in party membership), concluding that:

. . . actions taken by the party leadership were directed more toward internal rather than
external conditions . . . Thus, it can be said that internal factors have been instrumental
in promoting the changes analyzed in this study (p. 192).

In presenting our own theory of party change, we follow the suggestion
of Gibbs (1972) to present an informal 'discursive' exposition of a theory,
which makes a case for the theory, followed by a 'formal' statement that
facilitates empirical testing.

A Discursive Exposition of the Theory

Our own theory resembles Panebianco's formulation in many respects, so
again, we begin by responding to Panebianco. As does Panebianco, we
accept the premise that parties are basically conservative organizations,
which will not change simply for the sake of change. Like Panebianco, we
feel that while internal factors (including changes in the 'dominant coalition',

meaning the leadership group) may be directly responsible for changes, environmental 'stimuli' may act as an important catalyst for the process that ultimately results in change. And like Panebianco (p. 261), we feel that a high level of party institutionalization will tend to stifle the effects of factors promoting change.

We differ from Panebianco in two ways. First, we think that it is important to explicitly state in the model what he leaves to be inferred (from admission that his explanation is not exhaustive, p. 247): that some party change can be explained by internal factors alone, i.e. without an external stimulus. Second, we feel it is essential to develop more explicitly and fully the concept and role of the 'external stimulus' in the model. (Though he never explicitly limits the notion to electorally-related stimuli, he does say that 'electoral defeat and deterioration in terms of exchange in the electoral arena are classic types of external challenges which exert very strong pressure on the party', p. 243.)

Specifically, we feel that the most potent external stimuli are those which cause a party to reevaluate its effectiveness in meeting its primary goal, whether that be electoral success or something else. These externally induced 'shocks' to the party's internal system can catalyze a process of change that reaches more broadly and cuts more deeply than can occur as the result of internal changes (such as changes in leadership and/or the dominant faction) alone. After providing an overview of our theoretical model, leaving the discussion of 'shocks' vague for the moment, we. will come back to the topic and provide more detail on specific shocks and their relationship to particular party goals.

Premises

Our theory is based on three important premises:

1. Though all parties have numerous goals, each party has a 'primary goal', and the primary goal varies among parties – and perhaps within parties across time. (Such goals include: vote maximizing, office maximizing, representation/participation of members and policy/ideology advocacy.)

2. Though parties may also change under other circumstances (such as internal disputes and/or leadership changes), the most dramatic and broadest changes will occur only when the party has experienced an external 'shock'. This derives from the perception of parties as conservative organizations, which change only when it is established that there is good cause and not simply for the sake of change.

3. External shocks are external stimuli that impact on the party's primary goal; other external stimuli may also affect party change, but less abruptly, less broadly and less dramatically. For instance, electoral stimuli will have more impact (at the level of a 'shock') on parties that are primarily vote

maximizers than on parties with policy advocacy as the primary goal. Policy-related stimuli (e.g. the collapse of the Berlin Wall and of Soviet communism) will have the effect of a 'shock' on parties that are primarily policy advocates and less impact (if any, depending on the extent to which policy advocacy is of any importance) on parties that are primarily electorally motivated.

Our theory is designed to explain fundamental party change on a number of dimensions (organization, strategy and ideology/policy positions). Other internal changes (e.g. in leadership personnel, financial resources, factional dominance) are incorporated as important causal factors but are not themselves explained by the theory. Independent of external shocks, changes in the dominant coalition may themselves result in fundamental change, but it is likely to be more limited than is possible when an external shock causes a significant reassessment of the party's effectiveness.

Key Independent Variables

Among the key explanatory variables in the model are two internal variables, leadership change and dominant faction displacement, and a number of external stimuli. An additional internal variable, the party's age as an indicator of institutionalization, is thought to diminish the impact of the latter variables.

Leadership change. Changes in party leadership personnel may be part of a broader commitment to change, i.e. where new leadership is deemed necessary to accomplish changes that have already been decided upon, but they may also be incidental to intentions to change. For instance, leaders may be replaced for 'personal' reasons, such as the decision to pursue other interests (e.g. business, family), ill health, age ('generational turnover') or even death. New leaders elected to fill vacancies created by such circumstances may advocate and succeed in bringing about some change, even absent external stimuli, but they are not likely to have the clear, broad mandate that an external shock creates.

Likewise, when a new party leader assumes the position by virtue of being the head of a victorious faction after a bloody internal dispute, that leader is likely to pursue the change closest to the hearts of the faction, but is also likely to leave other dimensions unchanged so as to cause as little further disruption as possible. Such a leadership change, like those cited above, is not likely to produce the situation where change on a number of dimensions is possible (as would be the case from an external shock).

Change in dominant faction(s). Nearly all parties have identifiable factions within them. Some parties, in fact, are partially identified as collections of

rival factions. (The German Greens illustrate the point.) If the factions differ strongly on the 'basics' of the party's identity, strategy or organization, then displacement of one faction (or coalition of factions) as 'dominant' by another would create a circumstance under which party change – at least on the dimension(s) of greatest dispute – would be possible if not likely. In the absence of an external shock, however, the change would likely to be limited as mentioned under 'leadership' above.

Though leadership changes can occur without factional displacements and – at least hypothetically – factional displacements could occur without changes in leadership, the latter is not very likely. In our theory, factional displacement alone is given the same weight in the explanation as leadership change alone. But when factional displacement involves leadership change as well, the impacts of the two are assumed to be additive, at least.

External stimuli.   What we call 'external stimuli' include numerous factors identified in the literature as important 'environmental changes'. Though too numerous to list here, examples would certainly include relevant constitutional reforms, provision for public funding, birth of relevant new parties and, of course, changes in the proportions of votes and seats received by the party. In brief, these can be thought of as social, economic and political changes and events that take place outside the observed party. Some of these stimuli are 'universal' within the system, i.e. applying to all parties equally: such would be the constitutional reforms and advent of public funding. Others are party-specific, such as changes in the party's own level of support.

Any of these stimuli could conceivably cause a party to 'adapt' through change on one dimension or another, even absent leadership or factional change. Given that parties are basically conservative organizations, a stimulus would presumably have to catch the attention of someone in the party who would see fit to argue that adaptive change would be needed in order for the party to 'do better' in some way than it would otherwise do. In most instances, such an argument would have to contend with a wall of resistance to change, the result being delayed, limited change if any at all. However, particular party-specific stimuli can be identified which would not just produce limited change, but rather stimulate a significant reassessment of the party's effectiveness with ripples felt throughout the organization. Such a shock may be thought of as 'softening up' a normally conservative organization, shaking and perhaps even cracking the wall of resistance. When a shock of this nature coincides with (and perhaps results in) changes in leadership and dominant faction(s), the circumstances are optimal for broad, fundamental party change.

What we mean by an 'external shock' is an external stimulus so directly related to performance considerations on a party's 'primary goal' that it causes the party's decision-makers (perhaps through pressure by others

within the party) to undertake a fundamental reevaluation of the party's effectiveness on that goal dimension (Janda, 1990). Given the extent of internal disruption caused by the shock, abrupt, broad and dramatic changes may result.

Not all parties are affected by a given stimulus in the same way or to the same degree; a 'shock' for one may be just another environmental change for another. This is largely because the external stimulus is a shock only if it relates directly to the party's primary goal and not all parties share the same primary goal. Though some (including Downs and possibly Panebianco) assume that all parties are primarily electorally motivated, a substantial literature challenges that assumption.

Because the shocks are goal-specific, we turn first to a discussion of alternative primary goals, and then to some examples of shocks related to each goal.

Alternative Primary Goals

Strom (1990) not only identifies three types of competitive party behavior, each of which is tied to a different primary goal (votes, offices, policies), but also provides a model to explain and predict which type of behavior will predominate for a particular party on the basis of institutional and organizational factors. Rather than seeing the behavioral modes as mutually compatible, he argues that:

> We can fruitfully think of vote seeking, office seeking, and policy seeking as three independent and mutually conflicting forms of behavior in which political parties can engage (Strom, 1990: 570-1).

(The vote-seeking model is most closely identified with the thinking of Anthony Downs, who argued that 'since none of the appurtenances of office can be obtained without being elected, the main goal of every party is the winning of elections' [1957: 34-5]. Subsequently, critics have noted that it is indeed possible to maximize office benefits without maximizing votes, and hence the separation into the two models.)

Deschouwer also discusses the need to consider more possibilities than electoral performance as primary motivators of party behavior: 'Electoral defeat is [thought to be] the mother of change. But that only works as long as we accept that the electoral goal is dominant' (1992: 9). First among his alternatives to votes is 'power' (which seems identical to 'office benefits'):

> Electoral results are important. But they are not equally important for all parties, and for a single party they do not always have the same importance . . . A party primarily oriented towards political power certainly needs voters, but is not necessarily out of power when it loses. Especially in systems where power is reached through coalition formation, electoral losses can be of little importance (Deschouwer, 1992: 16).

Second is provision of a vehicle for organizing and articulating members' wishes, as exemplified in a fraction of the Flemish Greens:

> Within the Flemish Green party, the feelings are divided since the 1991 elections. This party also expected to win votes, and actually did: from 4.5% to 4.9%. They expected at least 7%. One fraction in the party is disappointed, and blames the party structures. The other fraction warns against direct reaction on electoral results. This party, they say, is not meant to win elections. It is meant to be an open and democratic participatory party (Deschouwer, 1992: 17).

(The same distinction applies to the factions identified as 'realos' and 'fundos' in the German Greens, as fully documented elsewhere.)

Deschouwer's 'participation' goal seems related to what others have identified as a 'representation' mission for parties. These concerns can be embraced by the broader concern for intraparty democracy. Though not themselves applying the concepts to political parties per se, Bruce et al. (1991) have empirically investigated the extent to which individual activists in America's presidential parties are motivated by 'advocacy politics' (i.e. policy advocacy), 'vote maximization' and 'representation'. With regard to representation, they note that:

> One traditional view of parties sees them representing the public. They serve as 'mediating institutions' and 'as links between the community and the larger political world' (Price, 1984: 112). Issue positions taken by the party reflect those held by its constituents. Almond and Powell write, 'The political party is the specialized interest aggregation structure of contemporary societies . . . Its organization thus involves arrangements for ascertaining voter preference' (1978: 205–6). If the party ascertains and aggregates, then the partisan banner becomes a rallying point for those being represented (Bruce et al., 1991: 1090).

Combining the thinking of Strom, Deschouwer and others, we employ a fourfold treatment of possible primary goals for political parties: (1) vote maximization; (2) office maximization; (3) policy advocacy; and (4) intraparty democracy maximization.

Primary Goals and External Shocks

For vote maximizers.   The event that would most obviously send shock waves through a primarily vote-maximizing party is electoral failure or at least a pattern of electoral failures. What constitutes a 'failure' would, of course, be in the eye of the beholder (see Deschouwer, 1992, for a discussion of this measurement problem). It is probably better to listen to the party itself than to attempt to indirectly assess when such shocks have occurred. Parties undergoing strenuous debates over how to 'improve the dismal situation' can be assumed to have experienced such a shock, whether it amounted to a 20 percent or a 5 percent drop in electoral fortunes – which might be measured either in votes or in seats.

For office maximizers.   In pure two-party systems, one cannot distinguish between vote maximizers and office maximizers, for winning the election also means controlling the government. Office maximizers focus on holding portfolios in a coalition government, which only pertains to parties in multiparty systems. Even under conditions of coalition government, not all parties place a premium on this goal, of course, as exemplified by parties that refuse to compromise with other parties and prefer to benefit from blackmail potential (i.e. operating as policy advocates and/or membership represen-tatives). For parties that are primarily office maximizers, though, the shocks that most dramatically shake up the party are those directly related to participation in government. In systems where coalition governments are commonplace, the willingness of other parties to join you, or to allow you to join them, is critical. When other parties declare their unwillingness to join you (as a large party) or to allow you to join them (if you are a small party), that shock may indeed be felt throughout the party. This is most likely to happen when the other relevant parties have changed themselves, creating what they perceive is now unacceptable distance between themselves and you, or when circumstances in society have changed in ways that have altered the perception of your party's acceptability as a partner. Alter-natively, other, more acceptable partners, may have arisen and made themselves available to your former coalition partners, making your participation unnecessary for the foreseeable future. Another, quite dif-ferent type of shock for office maximizers would be the collapse (electoral or organizational) of a reliable coalition partner, resulting in need for fundamental reconsideration of office maximizing strategy (especially so for small parties who see the collapse of their largest coalition partner). In the latter case, a redesigned strategy may require changes in other dimensions, e.g. the party's policy/ideology positions, so as to make the party acceptable to alternative partners.

For policy/ideology advocates.   In parties whose dominant group or coali-tion considers policy purity to be more important than winning votes or gaining access to benefits of office, electoral failures and even loss of participation in government will be of less consequence (i.e. be less of a shock) than shocks more directly related to the party's policy positions (or ideology, where one exists). Such a shock causes even the purists within a party to consider changing the party's identity, not primarily because of electoral considerations, but rather because of losing confidence in the correctness or importance of key positions. An example would be the impact that the fall of the Berlin Wall and failure of Soviet communism had on other communist parties, such as in Italy. Another could be the impact of successfully negotiated reductions in Europe-based nuclear weapons on the Green parties; the 'environment' in that case rendered an important position

less relevant, causing at least the need for reprioritizing the parties' remaining positions. Even for fundamentalists within the Greens, loss of a central issue must have been sufficient cause for rethinking policy priorities and, to some extent, party identity.

For intraparty democracy maximizers.   For parties whose main goal is careful and active representation of members' wishes (i.e. majority wishes), changes in those views are an obvious 'internal' source of change in what is articulated. An external cause may be behind the internal changes, however, such as societal or party system changes which fundamentally alter the makeup of the party's membership. An example would be numerous agrarian parties that, in the face of declining numbers of farmers in their countries, found themselves with memberships that were increasingly non-agricultural. For some, 'center party' simply became a more honest designation of what the remaining members had in common. Another type of membership shock would be a sudden, unintentional, increase or decrease in the size of the membership (assuming, that is, that the 'shock' was not in fact the result of an internal decision to change the membership size). Others have noted the (negative) relationship of membership size to the homogeneity and involvement of members within a party. For a party that places a premium on responding to members' wishes, a dramatic change in size would presumably cause a rethinking of internal mechanisms for interest aggregation and articulation.

Activists concerned with intraparty democracy, who place emphasis on both representation and participation of party members, may also be 'shocked' by societal changes that fundamentally change expectations or resources with regard to participation. For example, Heidar (1992: 6) has noted that:

> . . . in the 'alternative movements' of the 1970s – relabeled 'new politics' during the 1980s – there was a potential for renewed citizen involvement. The 'new participationists' considered themselves emancipated from the state, employing 'practices that belong to an intermediate sphere between private pursuits and concerns and institutional, state-sanctioned modes of politics' (Offe, 1987: 65).

Presumably a consequence of the shift to postindustrialism, such demands for more and different participation could create a shock even, and perhaps especially, for parties which have traditionally maintained internal democracy/member governance is a prime goal of the organization.

Toward a Formal Theory of Party Change

The preceding discursive discussion presented the central features of our theory, placing our thinking in the context of the literature and examining

some competing perspectives. Because a discursive exposition lacks the rigor necessary for a thorough, systematic empirical analysis, this section is aimed at providing some of that rigor, by detailing the definitions, assumptions and propositions that comprise the theory.

At present, our theorizing is limited to the class of *competitive* political parties, those that compete for votes in free elections. (Thus the theory does not embrace all parties worldwide, some of which maintain political power by restricting competition while others pursue power outside the electoral system by seeking to subvert the government.) It is our ultimate purpose here to propose a set of interrelated statements that explain the circumstances under which competitive parties change their rules, structures, policies, strategies or tactics.

Definitions

Competitive political party.   For our purposes, a competitive political party is an organization that pursues the goal of placing its avowed representatives in political office, which it does by running candidates for offices in competitive elections. All competitive parties (by definition) pursue this goal to some extent – otherwise the organization would not be a party but an interest group, movement or something else. However, parties have additional goals, one or more of which might be given priority over winning elections. Moreover, the professed goal of winning office may be secondary to some other goal. Despite Downs, who holds that 'parties formulate policies in order to win elections, rather than win elections in order to formulate policies' (1957: p. 28), Laver and Schofield discuss disagreement in the coalition theory literature between 'office as an end in itself' and 'policy as an end in itself' (1990: 39–48). This disagreement exists within parties as well. For example, Przeworski and Sprague explain the dilemma confronting socialist parties who pursued a goal of winning votes: 'By broadening their appeal, socialist parties dilute the general ideological salience of class and, consequently, weaken the motivational force of class among workers' (1986: 45). In a similar vein, there was a clash within the German Green Party between the 'pragmatists', who seek to advance environmental causes through an electoral strategy and the 'fundamentalists' who believe that competing for office weakens the party's policy posture (Harmel, 1989).

Party goals.   A general theory of party change must be able to evaluate change with reference to alternative party goals. We identify four party goals that are especially noteworthy, beginning with the defining characteristic of competitive political parties:
  1. *Winning votes/winning elections.* Although a distinction can be made

between winning votes and winning elections, we follow the tendency in the literature to treat winning votes and winning elections together. Following Strom (1990: 566–7), we regard parties that pursue this goal as *vote-seeking* parties. Typically in the comparative parties literature, the success of vote-seeking is measured by the percentage of votes (or seats) that the party wins in legislative elections.

2. *Gaining executive office.* American scholars neglect the distinction between winning elections and gaining executive office until reminded of the plight of the Democratic Party, which regularly won majorities in Congress during the last quarter-century but usually lost the presidency. This distinction is central to European scholars, for whom election results are only one ingredient of government formation in parliamentary systems. With Strom, we refer to parties that avidly pursue gaining executive office as *office-seeking* parties, including those that seek 'private goods bestowed on recipients of politically discretionary governmental and subgovernmental appointments' (p. 567). Typically in the coalition theory literature, success of office-seeking is measured by participation in cabinet government and by numbers of ministries held.

3. *Advocating interests/issues/ideology.* Contrary to Downs, some parties appear to pursue office as a means of influencing policy. Budge and Keman (1990) make a good case for the primacy of group interests or policy issues when explaining the behavior of parties in entering coalitions, obtaining ministries and influencing policy. Nevertheless, Strom describes the *policy-seeking* party as the 'least adequately developed model of competitive party behavior' (p. 568). Accordingly, not much progress has been made in the literature on measuring success of policy-seeking.

4. *Implementing party democracy.* This is a goal that Strom does not consider, but it surely conditions the behavior of a small set of 'new politics' parties. For example, the German Green Party worked to maintain grass-roots participation and to limit leadership control in a determined effort to combat Michels' Iron Law of Oligarchy (Harmel, 1989). Similarly, the US Democratic Party in 1972 appeared to be more concerned with implementing party democracy than with winning the election. Certainly this was true of many Democratic party activists in the late 1960s and early 1970s for whom intraparty democracy was a goal in itself. We will call these parties *democracy-seeking*.

By allowing for multiple goals in our theory, we can explain some apparently non-rational actions taken by parties, or factions within parties, that arise when observers assume that parties pursue only the single goal of winning votes or that all parties pursue the electoral as their primary goal. Tsebelis owes this analytical problem to the incomplete perspective of the observer: 'The observer focuses on only one game, but the actor is involved

in a whole network of games – what I call *nested games*. What appears suboptimal from the perspective of only one game is in fact optimal when the whole network of games is considered' (1990: 7).

Party organization.   A theory of party change must include concepts of party organization. As organizations, parties have both some hierarchy of authority and some division of labor. Our theory recognizes five types of organizational actors: (1) *top leaders* who constitute the party's key national decision makers; (2) *middle-level leaders* who head its divisions; (3) *activists* who regularly carry out party operations; (4) *members* who occasionally assist the party with votes, funds or activities; and (5) *supporters* who at least vote for the party in elections. At any time, some of these actors (of any type/s) may comprise a party *faction*, which Zariski defines as 'any intraparty combination, clique or grouping whose members share a sense of the common identity and common purpose and are organized to act collectively – as a *distinct-bloc*–within the party – to achieve their goals' (1960: 33).

The literature on organizational theory notes that organizations are controlled by a dominant coalition, which 'is comprised of the power center in the organization. This power center or coalition is that which makes the strategic choices in regard to the organization and its structure' (Hall, 1987: 118). For our theory on political parties, we adopt the virtually equivalent definition proposed by Panebianco:

> . . . a party's *dominant coalition* is composed of those – whether inside or, strictly speaking, outside of the organization itself – organizational actors who control the most vital zones of uncertainty [e.g. professional knowledge, environmental relations, communications, rules, financing, and recruitment]. The control over these resources, in its turn, makes the dominant coalition the principal distribution center of organizational incentives within the party (1988: 38, emphasis added).

A party's dominant coalition may itself consist of an alliance of factions, in which case power within the dominant coalition is dispersed rather than concentrated. Panebianco usefully distinguishes between two concepts in analyzing a dominant coalition (1988: 39). Its *conformation* refers to the distribution of power relationships among the party's division leaders and existing factions. The greater the dispersal of power among factions, the weaker the conformation of the dominant coalition. Its *composition* refers to the specific people who serve as top leaders, middle-level leaders and factional leaders. The extent to which the composition of the dominant coalition varies between time points affects party change, even if its conformation remains unaltered.

If the dominant coalition is factionalized, the *dominant faction* is the one most likely to get its way within the coalition. A *participating faction* is any non-dominant faction in the dominant coalition. An *outside faction* is any

faction outside the dominant coalition. Top leaders, middle-level leaders or even activists may themselves lead party factions.

Party change.   According to *Webster's Dictionary of Synonyms* (1951), 'change' is an inclusive term that denotes 'any variation, alteration, or modification of a thing, as in its form, substance, or aspect'. *Party change* (in the broadest sense) is any variation, alteration or modification in how parties are organized, what human and material resources they can draw upon, what they stand for and what they do. But this usage is so broad that it raises unrealistic expectations about the scope of a theory of party change. Our theory only predicts those aspects of party change that are within a party's direct control – that it decides to change. Our interest is in explaining party change that comes directly from a group decision or from action taken by a person authorized to act for the party in that sphere. Examples are changes in party rules, structures, policies, strategies and tactics. We do not attempt to explain change that a party experienced indirectly as a result of forces or actions beyond the direct control of the organization, e.g. an increase in the number of votes won in elections, decreased support from social groups, extent of factionalism and even the death of a leader.

Of course, party decisions can have secondary effects for party change, but such consequences also lie outside the scope of our theory. For instance, if the party decides to alter its issue stand, that is encompassed by our theory. Whether it gains or loses supporters as a consequence is outside our theory. This is important to emphasize. There is a tendency in the literature to interpret party change as 'reform' and to assume that reforms function as intended – despite reformers' mixed record of success (Janda, 1980). Organizational theorists also tend to assume that organizational change is functional – that changes help organizations adapt in the face of adversity. However, Staw et al. (1981: 501) regard that as an unwarranted assumption, and Kaufman cites several factors that operate against the functional nature of change:

> In the first place, difference of opinion about whether organizational changes are necessary and what changes should be made usually divide the organization's leaders and their advisers and also the members who concern themselves with such things. People of more or less equal wisdom and virtue and knowledge often end up taking different sides on questions of this kind (1985: 47).

In the second place, the way these decisions are reached in most organizations does not ensure outcomes appropriate to the circumstances. The process of organization decision making does not prevent adequate, and even optimal decisions. But in general it entails a substantial probability that in many instances the outcomes will be ineffectual and perhaps downright pernicious.

In the third place, the execution of organizational decision is often far from perfect, so that what is actually done in many cases does not carry out the intent and strategy of the decision makers and sometimes even negates their wishes (Kaufman, 1985: 47). Thus our theory explains why and when party change occurs, but it is not a theory that states whether party change ('reforms' if you will) works as intended. Such theorizing is important but it requires extensive knowledge of environmental influences and is far beyond our theoretical scope.

Environmental change.   The literature on organizational theory stresses environmental effects on organizations generally (Scott, 1987: 19) and environmental effects on political parties have been demonstrated by Harmel and Janda (1982). Accordingly, one should expect some changes in the environment to produce party change. Whetten's review of the literature on organizational growth and decline processes (1987) attaches great importance to environmental change and many parties scholars (e.g. Katz and Mair, 1990) assert that parties change by adapting to environmental changes. However, Romanelli's review of the literature on the ecological approach to organizational variations in response to environmental change holds that while existing theories are promising in their completeness, they are short on measuring routines and competencies and do not predict patterns of organizational form evolution (1991: 86–7). In the case of political parties, we have lacked even a set of clearly defined concepts of environmental change, which in its broad dictionary sense of 'any variation, alteration, or modification of a thing, as in its form, substance, or aspect' – is again too broad to be useful.

We preserve 'change' as an umbrella term that covers all types of environmental variation and introduce some specific terms to describe key types of change. Underlying our discussion of environmental change is the notion of an environmental *event* – a specific happening that occurs at a particular time (or over a defined period) and that is publicly recorded. An election is an environmental event and so is a workers' strike, or a war. We introduce the term *shock* for a special type of environmental event: one that has severe consequences, usually for specific parties. An example for the Republican party would be the Watergate affair and President Nixon's resignation in 1974; an example for communist parties would be the 1989 collapse of the Berlin Wall and the end of communist rule in Eastern Europe. External shocks usually impact on parties by impinging on their primary goals. We distinguish environmental shocks from other events simply to provide a richer theoretical vocabulary for describing the effects of environmental change on party change.

One can contrast events, which are obtrusive and identifiable, with day-to-day environmental happenings that are unobtrusive and anonymous. These

happenings can be individually insignificant but, when cumulated and measured, they become significant and often a matter of public record. Examples are a shift in voter preferences, a decrease in the proportion of blue-collar workers, or casualties in a war. We use these ideas to distinguish an environmental modification from an environmental trend. An environmental *modification* is a discrete event that alters the environment in which the party operates. An example would be passage of the Federal Election Campaign Act in 1971, which imposed stringent rules for reporting campaign contributions and expenditures. The 1974 amendment to the FECA limiting the amounts that PACs could contribute to campaigns would be another environmental modification.

A trend is a series of incremental changes in aggregate observations that *tend* to move in the same direction so that they cumulate into a consistent, measurable shift over time. Within the four-decade period under study, most environmental trends are essentially linear, showing a positive or negative difference between time t and $t + n$.[1] Examples are the increase in the percentage of citizens who obtain their news from television versus newspapers, measured on an annual basis since 1950; and the increase in the literacy rate since the turn of the century. Trends are usually computed for aggregate observations of unobtrusive and anonymous environmental happenings, but trends can also be calculated for quantitative event data, such as election results.

We recognize that there are different types of change within parties that parallel the types of environmental change discussed above. For example, we can speak of a party modification (a rules change), a party trend (a steady increase in the size of the conventions) and a party event (selecting a new leader). While future refinements of our theory might be able to account for these different types of changes, our present attempt is directed mainly at explaining party change in general, with *party change* encompassing all self-imposed changes in party rules, structures, policies, strategies, or tactics.

Assumptions

Like all theories that generate sets of testable propositions, our theory of party change rests on a number of assumptions. In the logic of inquiry,

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1. Trends may also be curvilinear, in which case the cumulative difference from t to $t + n$ will underestimate the fluctuation during the period. Examples are unemployment and inflation rates, but one could also cite shifts in support for political parties that evidenced decline and resurgence. Obviously, long-term theories of cyclical party realignment fit the notion of a curvilinear trend or cycle. Stimson describes such movement followed by reversal as a weak form of cycling in contrast to the more specific meaning of cycle in mathematics (Stimson, 1991: 26).

assumptions are untested empirical assertions. They are untested primarily because they are too general or vague to be tested – such as the assumption in collective choice theory that actors behave rationally. We make similar assertions about political parties that we assume to be true. For example, we assume that parties, like other organizations, seek to conserve human and material resources. We formalize our most important assumptions as follows:

A1. *Parties are conservative organizations and resist change.* Because self-imposed change usually consumes human or material resources, parties resist modifying their rules, structures, policies, strategies or tactics. In addition, they resist change because it threatens the conformation of the dominant coalition. A corollary to this assumption is A1′: *Parties will only change under pressure.*

A2. *When party change occurs, it is imposed by the dominant coalition at the time of the change.* This follows from the definition of the dominant coalition as the power center of the party and as the decision making unit. This assumption recognizes (a) that the dominant coalition may make changes under pressure from others in the party and (b) that change may be due to a *new* dominant coalition headed by a new dominant faction.

A3. *The dominant coalition will introduce change only when it estimates that the benefits overcome the costs.* There are two main sources of pressure that enter this cost/benefit calculation. One is internal, arising from challenges to the conformation of the dominant coalition. The other is external, arising from inability to achieve the party goals that the coalition perceives as important. This leads to two key subsidiary assumptions:

   A3.1. *The dominant coalition will introduce change when it sees change as consolidating or preserving its power.* Pressures for this change originate from threats to the conformation of the dominant coalition, primarily from threats to the dominant faction. The costs and benefits tend to be calculated by top leaders and imposed by top leaders with little participation by others in the organization. A corollary is assumption A3.1′: *Self-imposed change can be power-motivated.*

   A3.2. *The dominant coalition will introduce change when it sees change as advancing the party's goals.* Pressures for this change originate primarily from events or changes in the environment as interpreted by party activists and middle level leaders. The cost/benefit calculations tend to be widely discussed through all ranks of party actors, some of whom disagree on the importance

of the goals under debate. A corollary is assumption A3.2′: *Self-imposed change can be goal-motivated.*

A4. *All parties have multiple goals, but one is more important than any other.* The most important goal of a party is called its *primary* goal.

A5. *The criteria for judging the party's performance in achieving its goals vary with the nature of its primary goal.* The standards used to evaluate performance depend on the party's primary goals as viewed by the dominant coalition, by party factions and by party actors.

This leads to four subsidiary assumptions:

A5.1. *If the primary goal is winning elections, the performance criterion is winning votes or seats.*

A5.2. *If the primary goal is gaining executive office, the performance criterion is participation in government.*

A5.3. *If the primary goal is advocating interests or issues, the performance criterion is satisfaction of the policy clientele.*

A5.4. *If the primary goal is increasing party democracy, the performance criterion is satisfaction of party activists.*

Propositions

In contrast to assumptions, which are simply assumed to be true, the propositions in a theory are empirical assertions that are intended to be tested against data, at least in principle. Propositions, however, employ abstract concepts that need to be made more concrete before they can be tested in practice. This is done by translating propositions into parallel hypotheses that employ concrete concepts. First, we present a set of five propositions about power-motivated party change.

P1. *The more stable the conformation of the dominant coalition, the less likely the party will change.* This follows from assumptions A1, A2 and A3. Dominant coalitions tend to avoid change, but they will change in order to preserve or consolidate power. If the coalition's conformation is stable, change is unlikely. One measure of stability is the length of time that the dominant faction has been in power, and another is the concentration of power within the hands of the dominant faction. Another is the degree of factionalism within the party. These indicators may be incorporated into hypotheses that can be tested to support this proposition.

P2. *The greater the change in the conformation of the dominant coalition, the more likely the party will change.* This follows from A3.1. Once the power distribution in the dominant coalition has been altered, the new coalition will attempt to consolidate its power by modifying the party

rules or structure. This can be measured by the magnitude of the change in the conformation. The greatest change is expected when the dominant faction is replaced by an outside faction. A lesser change is expected if the dominant faction is replaced by a participating faction.

P3. *A change in the composition of the dominant coalition is likely to produce party change.* This also follows from A3.1, but the causal mechanism is due more to personalities than to groups. The organizational theory literature states that management style is most likely to change when new people enter management, even if the new people had been recruited by the outgoing management. This can be operationalized by considering changes when leaders die or resign and are replaced by leaders from the same factions.

P4. *Changes in the dominant coalition's conformation have more effect on party change than changes in its composition.* This follows from the definition of conformation and the additive effects of P2 and P3. When the conformation changes, the leaders' personalities change as well as their factional bases of power. This proposition can be tested by determining whether leadership change was rooted in a contest between factions or whether new leaders acceded to power without factional challenges.

P5. *A change in the person who leads the party is likely to produce party change.* This follows from assumption A3.1' (change can be power-motivated), but it also follows from A3.2' (change can be goal-motivated). In the first case, a change in party leadership, for whatever reason, is apt to produce party change simply to consolidate the new leader's power base within the party. In the second case, a new leader may impose new methods for achieving party goals. In either case, the extent of party change following a new leader depends on whether the leadership change coincides with a change in the dominant coalition. We next discuss other propositions based on goal motivations.)

According to our theory, internal pressures for party change that are motivated by a quest for power account for only one mechanism of party change. The other mechanism, goal-motivated change, results primarily from external pressures coming from the environment. We offer a set of five propositions concerning goal-motivated party change.

P6. *The poorer the party's performance in achieving its goals, the greater the pressures for party change.* This follows from A1 and A3.2. Given their conservative nature, parties are unlikely to change when their goal performance is merely satisfactory and they are least likely to change when they perform well. Parties experience stronger pressures to change when their goals are not being met than when they are. Consequently,

parties will be motivated to change more by failure in achieving their goals than by success. Indeed, the corollary proposition is P6′: *Parties will not change when performance is satisfactory, or excellent*. According to A4 and A5, P6 needs to be reformulated in terms of specific party goals, which is done in P7 through P10.

P7. *For vote-seeking parties – those that pursue winning elections as their primary goal – the more pronounced their electoral failures, the more likely they are to change*. This follows from A5.1. To test the proposition, parties must first be selected for their commitment to the goal of winning elections. Among these parties, changes are likely to follow shattering defeats (electoral shocks) or trends in declining shares of votes or seats.

P8. *For office-seeking parties – those that pursue executive office as their primary goal – the more pronounced their failures to achieve executive office, the more likely they are to change*. This follows from A5.2. To test the proposition, parties must be selected for their demonstrated interest in participating in cabinet governments. Among these parties, change is more likely to follow significant failures to enter cabinet governments or trends of failures.

P9. *For policy-seeking parties – those that advocate policies as their primary goal – the more pronounced their failures to satisfy their policy clientele, the more likely they are to change*. This follows from A5.3. After selecting parties for their demonstrated support of social groups or social policies, they can be evaluated for their failures in fulfilling their groups' expectations in advocating policies. This judgement can be made using sample survey data on patterns of citizen support for the party. Trends in declining shares of group support are likely to produce party change.

P10. *For democracy-seeking parties – those that prize intraparty democracy as their primary goal – the greater their dissatisfaction with party procedures, the more likely they are to change*. This follows from A5.4. Parties must be identified for their activists' commitment to intraparty democracy. Organizational change is likely to follow such party events as activists' protests and the creation of factions.

Our theory also contains some propositions that distinguish the effects of power-oriented and goal-oriented motivations on party change. We present seven propositions:

P11. *Goal-oriented changes attract more controversy and are more difficult to achieve than power-oriented changes*. This follows from A3.1 and A3.2. Power-oriented changes are inside jobs, while goal-oriented changes invite involvement by all classes of party actors and the public.

This proposition can embrace hypotheses that goal-oriented changes take longer to debate and decide, and that they attract more public commentary.

P12. *If a dominant faction is replaced by a faction that favors a different goal, the new dominant coalition will engage in both power-motivated and goal-motivated changes*. This development maximizes the conditions for party change, and it thus should produce the maximum amount of party change.

P13. *When making goal-oriented changes, vote-seeking parties are more likely to modify their rules and structure than are office-seeking or policy-seeking parties*. Vote-seeking parties are more likely than the other two types to look to organizational efficiency in winning votes. Therefore, they are more likely to modify the organization.

P14. *Power-motivations are more likely to produce changes in party rules and structure than in party issues, strategies and tactics*. Organizational power is enshrined and wielded in rules and structure, and we expect that attempts to consolidate power will deal with such organizational change. One can devise hypotheses to test this proposition by comparing the motivation for change with the type of change.

P15. *Outside of democracy-seeking parties, goal-motivations are more likely to produce changes in party issues, strategies and tactics*. This is the reverse side of P14. Because parties achieve their goals by reacting with the environment, if they fail to achieve their goals, they must modify the way they interact with the environment. This means altering their issues, strategies and tactics – except for democracy-seeking parties, treated in P16.

P16. *Democracy-seeking parties are equally likely to make changes in party rules and structure as in party issues, strategies and tactics*. Internal power distribution is the key issue for democracy-seeking parties, so they are likely to trade in this aspect of organizational change. However, their efforts are not to consolidate power, which distinguishes their efforts from power-motivated changes, but to disperse power through the organization.

P17. *Propensity of a party to change is inversely related to party age*. This follows from A1, and it conforms to statements in organizational theory literature that existing organizations, compared with new organizations, are less likely 'to exploit any new resources that may become available in the environment at large' (Romanelli, 1991: 95). Consequently, new organizations are quicker to experiment with new organizational forms. P17 also reflects statements in the parties literature that institutionalized parties are less likely to change, and that age is a common and objective measure of institutionalization. We expect that the effects of age in dampening change are non-linear, and

that as parties mature (to use the life-cycle analogy) additional years will have increasingly less effect.

Toward a Test of Integrated Party Change Theory

Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to engage in a full-blown test of the explicit theory presented here, it is nevertheless possible to point to selected examples from the literature to illustrate the applicability of the general framework.[2] Panebianco, while not claiming to have randomly chosen a sample of cases for a test of his model, has provided detailed accounts of fundamental change in what appears to be a carefully selected set of cases which do presumably fit that model. Not surprisingly, since our theory is quite similar to his in so many regards, those cases also fit our model. But we can go a bit further in analyzing differences among Panebianco's cases.

Panebianco cites the British Conservative Party, the PCI, the CDU and the SPD as cases in which external stimuli joined with preexisting internal disruptions to result in dramatic change. Panebianco stops there. Though he never explicitly says so himself, one could easily infer that the external stimuli in all of the cases were electoral failures. However, while that may be true for the Conservative Party and the SPD (where Panebianco himself says that the electoral failures were 'no more than a catalyst', and membership changes were certainly important as well), it is less true for the CDU and not true for the PCI.

Electoral failures constituted a 'shock' for the Conservative Party, which is and was undeniably an electorally motivated party, albeit more to win seats than votes. The SPD, which might best be characterized as having a 'mixed' primary goal (encompassing both electoral and membership concerns) was actually shocked by a combination of electoral and membership changes (the latter consisting of loosening of 'syndical support' as unions shifted to the right).

But for the PCI, electoral failures – while perhaps adding to the impact of the shock – were secondary to 'identity crises' brought on in 1956 by Khrushchev's attacks on Stalinism and most recently by the fall of the Berlin Wall and of Soviet communism. (For relevant discussions of the latter, see Ignazi, 1992.) The PCI, whose primary goal was policy advocacy, reacted dramatically to policy- (i.e. ideology-)related shocks.

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2. Although our propositions constitute a theory in the sense that the hypotheses are internally consistent, we do not mean to imply that we consider our list to be exhaustive of testable propositions that can be derived from our earlier, discursive exposition.

The CDU generally fits the category of parties driven by office concerns.[3] Panebianco notes that as an office maximizer, 'expulsion from central power was the chief catalyst of change' for the CDU when it lost power in 1966 (p. 258). Again, it was an office-related shock that caused the office-maximizing party to change dramatically.

As Panebianco notes, other conditions for change were already in place within each of these parties; nothing in our model contradicts the importance of internal factors. And as Panebianco also notes, it was external stimuli that catalyzed the changes. Though we do not accept the implication that no change would have occurred without external prodding, we certainly accept the conclusion that in these cases external stimuli were important in generating the magnitude of change that occurred. And we go further in suggesting that it was precisely because the external stimuli in each case corresponded to the party's primary goal that such dramatic change was possible. In yet another case, not analyzed by Panebianco but by Albinsson (1986), an electoral stimulus may have set the stage for change in Sweden's Moderate Party, but internal factors were such that some change would most likely have resulted from those things alone.

We recognize that a few selected, anecdotal examples do not constitute a true test of our theory of party change, and that clearly remains our ultimate objective. Though comparative data on political parties have not existed with which to test our integrated theory (or to adequately test any of the other theories of party change discussed above), such data are currently becoming available for testing such theories.[4] Richard Katz and Peter Mair, along with a cadre of country experts associated with their project, have collected annual data from the official records of political parties in 11 western European countries and the US, covering the period 1960–1990 (1992). Though the limitations of using only official reports are many and obvious, the data from this project will still make an invaluable contribution to the study of party change. Our own NSF-funded research project is producing judgemental data from other than official reports for 19 parties in four of the countries covered in the Katz/Mair project (Denmark, (West) Germany, the UK and the US) for the period 1950–1990.[5]

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3. However, we should note that in 1957 the CDU invited the Germany Party (DP) to share government although the CDU had a majority and could have governed alone.

4. Even in the organizational theory literature, however, there are few longitudinal comparative studies of environmental effects on organizational change. One author attributes this to 'difficulties involved in collecting detailed longitudinal data about environmental and organizational characteristics' and to 'the scarcity of theory regarding the characteristics of environments that may most likely engender a new organizational form' (Romanelli, 1991: 92).

5. These countries were chosen in part because of our familiarity with them and in part because of their party systems. They vary from a very stable two-party system (the US) to a multiparty system that was highly volatile during this period (Denmark). This research is supported by the National Science Foundation with joint grants to Robert Harmel and Kenneth Janda, Grants SES-9112491 and SES-9112357.

From the data collected by the two projects, we intend to prepare a comprehensive data set on party changes, including multiple indicators of four dimensions of party change: primary goal, organization (including both complexity and professionalization), issues/ideology and tactics for parties in our four countries. We also plan to assemble data for the same countries and years on each of the integrated model's 'independent variables', both internal and external. Once those data are available, it should be possible to test not only the integrated theory developed here, but also other extant theories of party change.

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